

# **Appendix 7B-4: Draft Process to Establish and Refine Interim Goals for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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Development of a process to establish interim goals to "ensure the protection of the natural system consistent with the goals and purposes of the plan" is a requirement of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2000. RECOVER, as the science and technical team in support of Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) implementation, with assistance from CERP program controls and others, has been charged with the development of this process.

The establishment of both interim and long-term goals is essential to the success of CERP. The goals should guide the implementation of CERP by identifying collectively shared objectives, and will provide assurance during the critical first phases of implementation that our cooperative efforts have resulted in tangible and measurable improvements. The establishment of interim goals will communicate our commitment to ensuring that the goals and objectives of CERP are being met.

Additionally, both federal and state law mandates that certain reporting requirements be met. WRDA 2000 calls for a report that "the Secretary [Army] and the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Commerce, and the State of Florida, shall jointly submit to Congress a report...[that includes] progress toward interim goals..." These reports are to be completed not less often than every five years. Florida's "Everglades Restoration Investment Act" of 2000 requires that an annual report on funds received and expended, and the progress made in the implementation of CERP be prepared for the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives, with copies being made available to the public (Section 373.470(7), Florida Statutes).

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## **BACKGROUND**

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**Interim goals** are predictions of comparatively short-term achievements during the implementation of CERP. Interim goals can be "milestones", i.e., short-term quantitative goals, or they may be "pathways", i.e., directions of change. Interim goals provide a basis for reporting on the progress made at specified intervals of time towards the successful implementation of the CERP program, and for periodically evaluating the accuracy of predictions of system responses to the affects of CERP. Interim goals are useful to policy makers, state legislators, Congress, scientists and the general public.

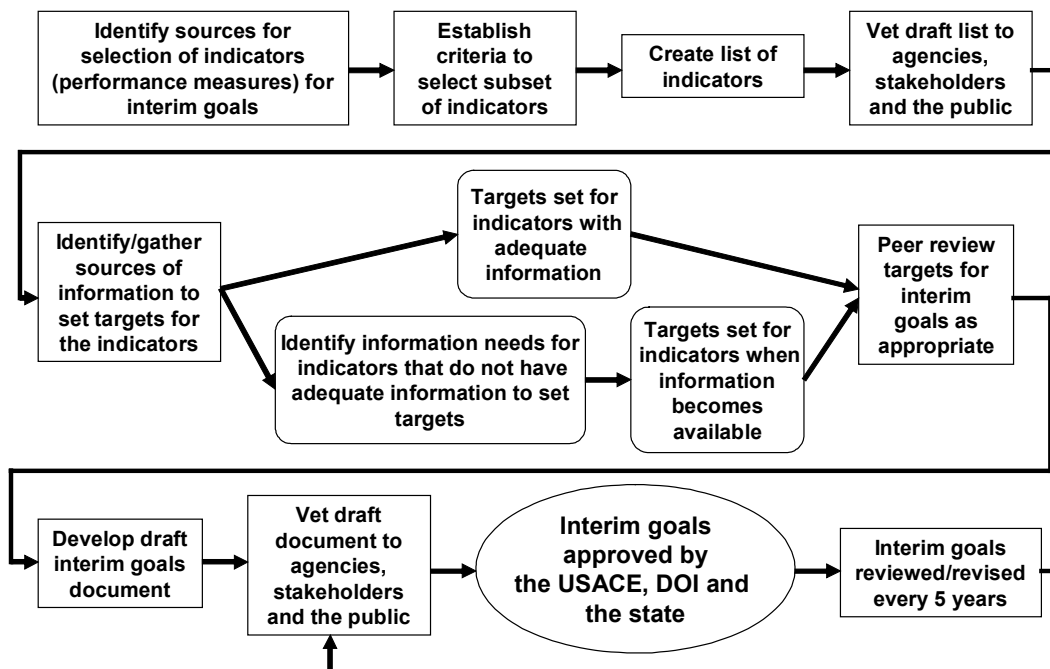
An interim goal can be defined by an indicator and a target. An indicator is an element or component of the natural or human systems that is expected to be positively influenced by CERP,

and has been selected to be measured as representative of a class of system responses that are desirable. A target is a measure of change by the indicator that is expected or desired during and following the implementation of CERP. The process of developing interim goals will be relatively straightforward for some targets (e.g., project implementation and hydrological responses), but more complex for others (e.g., ecological processes such as wading bird nesting success). In either case, interim goals should provide a means for evaluating overall CERP performance, keeping in mind the interannual hydrologic variability experienced in south Florida, and to give guidance to individual CERP projects. It is also expected that the development of these goals will be an iterative process in which indicators and targets will be reviewed and revised periodically as new information becomes available.

Interim goals, to be meaningful, must be quantifiable, flexible and science-based. The initial interim goals will be based upon the predictions of the status of each indicator at appropriate intervals and reporting increments, and will continue throughout the implementation of CERP, allowing for refinement through the adaptive assessment process as we learn more, and adjustment as schedules change due to unknown/unforeseen circumstances.

## THE TEAM

It is anticipated that an interagency, interdisciplinary planning team composed of RECOVER members and others will be established. Initially, this team will vet the proposed process and will then begin to work through the process to develop the actual interim goals (Figure 7b-4-1). Additional scientific expertise will be infused into the process as necessary to develop the interim goals. Agreement by consensus on each step of the interim goals process will be reached between the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Department of Interior (DOI) and the State of Florida.



**Figure 7b-4-1.** Process to Establish CERP Interim Goals.

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## THE PROCESS

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1. *Step one:* The sources for the selection of indicators for interim goals will be built upon existing planning documents. These documents include the *First Draft CERP Monitoring and Assessment Plan* (RECOVER, 2002), Total System Model [in prep], *CERP Master Implementation Schedule* (USACE and SFWMD, 1999), regional water supply plans (SFWMD, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d), and the strategic plan for the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (SFERTF, 2000)).
2. *Step two:* Criteria will be established to select a subset of the total indicators possible for the interim goals. The criteria will be consistent with the goals and objectives of CERP.
3. *Step three:* A list of indicators for the interim goals will be created, using the criteria established above. For each indicator the appropriate interval over which it will be evaluated will be identified.
4. *Step four:* The list of indicators for the interim goals created in step three will be vetted to agencies, stakeholders and the public through suitable venues. Refinements will be made to the list based on the vetting process.
5. *Step five:* Information will be gathered in order to set interim targets for the indicators from currently available predictive tools and planning documents such as the South Florida Water Management Model (SFWMM) and other predictive models, the *CERP Master Implementation Schedule*, and other planning documents and regulatory requirements. Model results will be analyzed to develop information to set the targets for the indicators.\*
6. *Step six (a):* For the indicators with adequate information, targets for interim goals will be set. *Step six (b):* Where more information is needed to set targets, the information needs will be identified and the Adaptive Assessment Team of RECOVER will develop processes and a schedule to gain needed information. As information becomes available, targets will be set for these interim goals. The targets for the interim goals will be scientifically peer reviewed as they are completed, as appropriate.
7. *Step seven:* A draft interim goals document describing the indicators and their targets will be developed when targets are developed for a substantial subset of interim goals.
8. *Step eight:* The draft interim goals document will be vetted through the same process used in step four and revised as necessary.
9. *Step nine:* The interim goals document will be approved by the USACE, the DOI and the State of Florida.
10. *Step ten:* The interim goals will be reviewed and revised at least every five years. New information will be gathered continuously to revise/update the interim goals, but a new interim goals document will only be produced every five years.

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## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND MECHANISMS

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WRDA 2000 requires interim goals to be established to "provide a means by which the restoration success of the Plan may be evaluated throughout the implementation process." It also mandates a report to Congress, "beginning on October 1, 2005 and periodically thereafter" that includes "progress toward interim goals established in accordance with subsection..."

Chapter 373.470, F.S. tells us that "[t]he district, in cooperation with the department, shall provide a detailed report on progress made in the implementation of the comprehensive plan, including the status of all project components..." and that this information "shall be provided annually in a single report..." For fiscal years 2000 and 2001, the CERP Annual Reports were published as stand alone documents (SFWMD and FDEP, 2000, 2002). Beginning with fiscal year 2002, this report will be published within the Everglades Consolidated Reports.

It is clear that Congress wants periodic reports on the progress of the plan and that the Florida Legislature requires annual reporting. Potential reporting mechanisms for the interim goals are the Adaptive Assessment Report, yearly reports to the state, five-year reports to Congress, a CERP Annual Report Card (see **Appendix 7b-2**) and the CERP Annual Reports (see Chapter 7a).

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## LITERATURE CITED

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